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BURMA AND THE BURMANS

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BURMA AND THE BURMANS;

OR,

"THE BEST UNOPENED MARKET IN THE WORLD."

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cc

BY

ARCHIBALD ROSS COLQUHOUN,

AUTHOR OF
"ACROSS CHRYSÊ," "AMONGST THE SHANS," "THE TRUTH ABOUT TONQUIN,"
"THE OPENING OF CHINA," ETC.

WITH MAP OF THE COUNTRY.

London:

FIELD AND TUER, THE LEADENHALL PRESS, E.C.
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL & CO.; HAMILTON, ADAMS & CO.

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PREFACE.

THE late massacres at Mandalay have drawn considerable public attention to Burma. But there are other matters which tend to bring that country into prominence just now, matters deeply concerning Great Britain and her Imperial interests in India.

French action in Tonquin, at first regarded by England with something little better than indifference, has grown with astounding rapidity. In the beginning it was given out to be a mere bagatelle, to be easily settled on the spot, not involving the discharge of a single musket; or, at the most, it was nothing more serious than the suppression of

a band of highwaymen and other wrongdoers outlawed from China. The *Times* was the first to sound the note of warning, and every prediction made has come true to the letter. Within eighteen months it has meant for the French two campaigns in Tonquin, where 18,000 men in the field have not proved strong enough to cope with the resistance offered, necessitating an increase of 15,000 men; while in Formosa, to which island the "idea" has extended, there are soon to be in the north alone some 10,000 men. An astute observer of human nature once said, "Les nations ne se servent que de deux langues—la guerre et le commerce." We begin with trade, and we progress to war. The French begin with war, and never get beyond it. Still, the path of conquest entered upon, the French will go on for some time. The French views with regard to Indo-China and South China are now well known, and are made no secret of by the French themselves. What is not understood, however, is that the theatre of European jealousies and rivalries has been extended from Turkey and

the Levant to the China seas; and the Eastern problem of the future for England is Russia on the west, and France on the east, closing in on her Indian frontiers. These facts may shortly be very forcibly impressed on our Government and the public.

It is necessary, therefore, that the public should know something about a country which will play an important part in the struggle, now not very far off, and which has been lately called the best unopened market in the world. Burma is known in England mainly as a country whence rice is exported; where, despite the heat, water and mud abound, where mosquitoes are plentiful, where the ladies wear a picturesque but not too ample costume, and where a dissolute young monarch spends most of his time in drinking and in murdering his relatives, with their followers and servitors. Yet this country deserves to be better known. In itself it is a highly interesting land, and politically and socially it is now of great consequence.

NOTE.

THE subjoined are works which have been consulted by the writer of the following pages :—Forbes's "Burma;" "The Burman;" Hunter's "Indian Gazetteer," or "India"; Yule's "Mission to Ava" and "Marco Polo;" Fytche's "Burmah;" *Fraser's Magazine*, "Burmah," Encyc. Brit. (last edition); "Buddhist Schools in Burmah," *Fraser*, Nov. 1876; "Among the Burmese," *Fraser*, 1878; *Cornhill*, Nov. and Dec., 1879, "Buddhists in Burmah;" "Across Chrysê" (trade chapters). See also "Truth about Tonquin" and "French Indo-Chinese Empire," for growth of French views and operations.

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BURMA AND THE BURMANS.

CHAPTER I.

UPPER BURMA.

European Explorers—The Former Empire—Natural Features of the Country—Number and Nature of Population—Religion—Education—State Labour and Slavery—Characteristics of the People—Marriage and Morals—Amusements—Mandalay—Characteristics of the Capital—Other Towns.

OF late years no explorations have been conducted in Burma, though several explorers have crossed Southern China into Burma. Since Colonel Yule's mission to Ava, very little about the character of the people and country has been learnt; what little is known being mainly due to the labours of Sir Arthur Phayre, Colonel Yule's chief, and

Forbes. Latter-day civilians and military men have done little to increase our knowledge.

The empire of Burma, at the time of our first war, 1824–26, comprised Burma proper, the principality of Mogoung, or Northern Shan states, Assam, Cachar, Manipur, Pegu, Arakan, and Tenasserim, and had tributary to it the Eastern or Burmese Shan states. In 1754 Burma had thrown off the yoke of Pegu, which it had worn since 1740. It annexed Mogoung in 1755, Pegu in 1757, Tenasserim in 1759, Manipur in 1774, Cachar in 1774, Arakan in 1784, and Assam in 1818.

Arakan and Tenasserim were annexed by the English; and Assam, Cachar, and Manipur made independent in 1826. Pegu was declared part of the British dominions in 1852. Since then the Northern Shan states, as far south as Maingna, in 25° 25′ N. lat., the Burmese Shan states, and a portion of the country east of the Chin-dweng, or western branch of the Irrawaddy river, have refused to pay tribute, and are now practically free.

Upper Burma, or Burma proper, may be said to lie compressed in the upper valley of the Irra-

waddy river. On the west it is bounded by the hilly table-lands, ranges, and valleys forming and bordering the Manipur plateau, and by the spurs of the Arakan "yoma," or backbone; on the north-east are the high hills forming a plateau, with peaks that measure from 18,000 to 20,000 feet (in lat. 28°), and with a pass (in lat. 25°) elevated 8730 feet; while on the south-east, to the south of Yunnan, the western face of the Burmese Shan table-land rises 5000 feet. The northern boundary, stretching a distance of hardly more than a hundred miles between Assam and Western Yunnan, is a *cul-de-sac* of mountain, the Tibetan plateau. On the south lie the provinces of British Burma.

Previous to the year 1825, the Burmese Empire was one of very great importance and extent, compared with the other Indo-Chinese nations. But at the present day it has shrunk into the dimensions of a petty principality, with a foreign civilized neighbour holding all its seaboard provinces and the mouths of its great water-way; while its power as a nation has been almost totally lost. The

extent of territory actually under the sway of the King of Burma is somewhat loosely defined, owing to the encroachments and more than half-admitted independence of some so-called subject States on the borders; but the gross area is about 67,000 square miles.

The Irrawaddy, a magnificent river springing from several streams rising in the lower flank and two great arms of the Tibetan plateau (in about lat. 28°, and between 97° and 90° E. long.), flows almost due south, and nearly bisects the whole country in its course, finally entering and crossing British Burma and flowing into the Bay of Bengal. The Irrawaddy is navigable all the year round for steamers as far north as Bhamo, near the South-Western Chinese frontier, and about 840 miles from the sea.

Between the junction of its great western branch the Chin-dweng, in lat. 21° 30′, and the Burmese boundary, in lat. 25° 25′, the river is joined by the Mogoung, Taping, Shwayli, Maiza, Madara, Myit Ngé, Panboung, and Moo rivers, and other minor streams. The Chin-dweng, or Khyeng-dwen, rises

in the Pakhoi and Shway Doungyee Hills. Just below the junction of the Ooru river, in lat 24° 38′, there is a heavy fall, and goods have to be transhipped at this place into canoes for the carrying on of traffic in the higher reaches of the river; about lat. 23° 10′ it is joined by the Manipur river; it falls into the eastern branch of the Irrawaddy about lat. 21° 30′. Below the junction of the main branches and the British boundary, the Yau and other minor streams have their junction. There are three defiles in the eastern branch between the mouths of the Mogoung and the Khyeng-dwen; the one above Bhamo is in places only 240 feet broad, and boat traffic is impracticable during the floods, owing to the fierce rushing of the stream; the defile below Bhamo is 970 feet broad at the narrowest; and the one above Mandalay is in no place less than a quarter of a mile. The general width of the river varies from one to three miles.

An estimate of the population can be formed on little else than conjecture, for no census has ever been taken. Colonel Symes gave the population as seventeen million souls, which subsequent in-

quirers reduced to three. The population cannot possibly be dense. The character of the country and the iniquitous government, entailing so much misery, preclude a heavy population. Possibly there are twenty-five persons to the square mile, or a total for Burma proper of 1,075,000, and 600,000 for the Northern Shan states, or a gross population of 1,675,000 inhabitants. This omits the Eastern Shan states, which are more populous. The devastating wars which have swept over Indo-China, and of which, owing to its position, it has been the theatre from the most remote historical times, have terribly thinned a population once very dense. It is now over three centuries since Europeans were first acquainted with the nations of Indo-China, and during the whole of that period those nations have waged among themselves, without foreign aid or interference, a course of hostility and devastation, pursued generally for conquest or revenge, as terrible as any on record.

The history of these wars has been an oscillation of advantages and defeats, in which Burmese, Siamese, and Cambodians alternately gain the

upper hand. Some forty years ago the last of these terrible paroxysms died away, principally from exhaustion, and left us the political arrangement of Indo-China,—namely, Burma, Siam, and Cochin-China—which until recently has held good. Everything goes to prove that the country was at one time very densely peopled, and the enormous cities and vast populations and armies depicted by Pinto the Mendacious are by no means vulgar fabrications. Proofs are being gradually brought to light in support of many of his statements. The indigenous inhabitants consist chiefly of Burmese and Shans; but Khyens, Kakhyens, Kathays, Yinnees, Yinnets, Yinbans, Karens, Paloungs, and other tribes are met with; as well as Chinese and natives of India, who have settled in the towns. There are very few countries in the world where a greater diversity of race will be met with than in Burma, but the Mongoloid element predominates, and it appears under very numerous forms.

The prevailing religion of the Burmese and Shans is Buddhism mixed with Shamanism. A

comprehensive idea of the nature of this religion as practised in Burma is unattainable within the limits of a short article, but a few salient points may be remarked. Contrary to the notion generally entertained in England, Burmese Buddhists are atheists of a very pronounced type; they do not worship Buddha, the images are not gods, and the "priests" are not priests in the Western sense of the word. The sole end and aim of Buddhism is annihilation; the images are mere representations of a being who was perfect; and the priests, or monks, as they ought more properly to be styled, are only men who, for their own benefit, have renounced the world to devote their lives to working towards the Nirvana, the annihilation they covet. In Burma religion is a business of life. The country is covered by temples, and these swarm with priests. High and low enter a monastery once in their lives, sometimes merely as a formality, but a vast number remain permanently in the order of the Yellow Robe. Lay rank is left at the door of the monastery, and even the identity of the monks is suppressed. They are professed

mendicants, and are ostensibly ascetics; but, as in Burma more than in any other country charity blesses him who gives as well as him who receives, monks are full when laymen are pinching their stomachs. The priestly classes are fairly pure; the tone is good; and theoretically, at least, great punctiliousness is insisted on by the people, who surrender the care of their souls to the priests, and salve their consciences by alms and largesses to them, and by contributions to the endowment of temples. Shamanism, the religion of Tartar progenitors, is professed in various slightly differing forms by all the hill tribes. It is merely the conciliation of spirits supposed to dwell in trees, rivers, stones, and other objects of nature; and even the comparatively civilized Burman, although a professed Buddhist, pays a sneaking deference to the malevolent genii which his imagination sees in every object, animate or inanimate.

The only educational machinery existing is to be found in the monasteries; lay schools do not exist for any practical purposes. The merest rudiments of secular education are imparted in these

institutions, the great object being the inculcation of religious precepts. But from the fact that nearly every adult male has passed through a monastery, it comes about that a Burman who cannot at least write his own name is very seldom met with; and education, such as it is, is fairly widespread. The education of women, however, is neglected, though they are free to learn. The majority of men return to lay pursuits after remaining in the monasteries a time, the duration of which, within certain limits, is dictated by their devoutness or yearnings for freedom.

The most mischievous feature of the Burmese, in common with other Indo-Chinese Governments, is the recognized claim of the sovereign to the service of the whole adult population, service which is exacted to an incredible extent. No man can call time or labour his own. Burma shares with Siam and Cambodia the disgrace of having in her midst a vile system of slavery. Many of the victims of this system are hereditary slaves, such as those condemned to serve at the pagodas; others are bond slaves, who could obtain their

liberty by paying their debts. Lepers and other incurables, executioners, who are generally pardoned malefactors, coffin-makers, and others employed in the disposal of dead bodies, as well as deformed or mutilated people, are rigidly set apart from the rest of the community, and very few people will hold any communication with them; but the sentence of isolation does not, except in the case of lepers, necessarily descend to their offspring. The Kakyens and Red Karens still carry on a shameful traffic in kidnapped captives. They find their way to Zimmé, and thence to Siam.

Dr. Anderson met many cases of slavery at and near Bhamo, the slaves having been purchased from the Kakhyens, who, like the Red or Eastern Karens, are kidnappers. Upwards of 1200 souls are said to have been annually captured by the Red Karens and sold to the Zimmé Shans, by whom they are generally resold to the Siamese. We have been asked frequently by the White Karen chief of Western Karennee to take his country under our protection, or else to annex it,

so as to stop the raids of the neighbouring man-stealers. If we had acceded to his request, and made representations to the King of Siam, this shameful traffic with Karennee would have been put a stop to long ago.

Yet the natives are extremely pleasant in manner, light-hearted, and more independent and courageous than other races of Indo-China. They are not so civilized as the Hindoos, they have absolutely no caste prejudices, and in other respects they differ from the natives of Hindostan so radically that they have scarcely any characteristics in common. Probably the liberty of women reaches in Burma a height not attained in any other country of the East, not even Japan. The choice of marriageable girls is perfectly free; a man's wife acts for her husband in almost any business capacity; women appear in public unveiled, and their intercourse with strangers is unrestricted. They are born petty traders, and in many cases conduct a thriving retail business, while their male relatives are idling or gambling. Marriage with the Burmese is purely a civil right, and although divorce

is very easily obtained, there is little immorality among them—notwithstanding travellers' tales to the contrary—and in some cases after divorce the parties to the suit promptly re-marry and live together as before. In spite of a great deal of improvidence, pauperism may be said to be quite unknown; none are very rich or very poor; a day's work is easily got; and the land is so bountiful that the earnings of a day suffice for three days' living. There are no poor laws, the monasteries in reality forming a gigantic system of relief, always open to strangers or natives alike, without any trouble about a "settlement."

The Burmese are a nation of smokers. Every man, woman, and child, from the king downwards, may be said to smoke—immense cheroots four or five inches long, made of a coarse leaf rolled up and filled with wood chips, raw sugar, and a dash of tobacco, according to taste. One of these cheroots, once lit, frequently passes round the entire family circle, not forgetting even the smallest members of it. The practice of tattooing the body from the waist to the knees may almost be said to be universal

among the male population. The operation is extremely painful, and in most cases it is performed in instalments; but some with stronger nerves, or by the aid of opium, have it all done at one time. The absence of tattoo marks is regarded as not very creditable; and those without them wear their dress in such a way that the want shall not be too evident. The Burmese are fond, to a surprising degree, of gambling, amusements, and sports, or of anything that will excite them. Boat-racing is a national sport, while boxing, foot-racing, and wrestling afford an endless fund of amusement.

The present capital of Burma is Mandalay, a city built on a site which twenty-five or thirty years ago was mere jungle. The capital has frequently changed its site, having, since 1740, been at Ava three times, at Amarapoora twice, and at Monchobo twice; but since 1857 it has been fixed at Mandalay. Mandalay is enclosed by a square brick wall, twenty-six feet high, crenellated at the top Twelve gates pierce the wall, and, from these, macadamized roads, a hundred feet broad, intersect the city. The number of houses inside

the walls is supposed to be about 13,000, and the population is estimated at about 60,000. Within the city walls are the king's palace and gardens, the treasury, arsenal, powder-magazine, and mint. The houses, as a rule, are mere huts, raised on piles five or eight feet high, and made of bamboo, with thatches of leaves; but there are some houses, particularly those of the Chinese, in which masonry is employed. In many respects Mandalay is superior to most Indo-Chinese cities; there is not the squalor to be seen in the Siamese or Cambodian capital, and, thanks partly to the army of dogs and pigs, the streets are fairly free from evil smells.

Bhamo, the extreme northern limit of navigation by steamer on the Irrawaddy, is a town about a mile long, situated on the left bank of the river, with a population of about 2500. Amarapoora, a city nearly a mile square, and more than once the capital, had not many years ago about 90,000 inhabitants. The number of pagodas and monasteries in and about the principal towns of Burma is vast beyond belief.

Pagan, the ruins of which cover an area of sixteen square miles, situated on the left bank of the Irrawaddy, is famous for its numerous temples, to count which is one of the proverbial impossibilities of the Burmese. This town is said to have been in remote times the residence of a long dynasty of kings. Katha has about 200 houses. Tagoung and Old Pagan, two of the earlier capitals, are a mass of ruins. At the site of the former place there exists a small fishing village of forty houses. Malé contains 300 houses, and is the customs port for clearing boats bound from Bhamo to Mandalay; Schien-pagah, 400 houses. Tsagaing is of large extent, and is inclosed by a massive decaying rampart. The interior space is but sparsely occupied by houses. The hills behind it are nearly covered with pagodas, temples and griffins, and long winding staircases; some of the latter are about half a mile in length. Ava suffered much from an earthquake in 1839; few relics remain of the city; the palace is gone; the streets are marked by ruins and by rows of fine trees that once formed boulevards. Myingyan is a large mart for rice. Koonyaiwa

has about 1200 houses. Yenangyoung is a large town, the centre of the petroleum trade. Magwé has about 3000 houses. Mengoon about 300 houses and a gigantic pagoda. Menhla is the frontier station, containing about 1000 houses. Besides the above there are many large towns and villages both along the river and in the interior.

Burmese houses are so fragile that towns quickly spring up or are deserted. When a royal whim, or the caprice of the court astrologers, dictates a change of locality for the capital, an order goes forth directing that the old city be abandoned, and commanding all loyal subjects to move into the new one. The houses are not so well put together that they cannot be easily taken to pieces, transported a few miles, and re-erected; but the abandonment of crops in the ground, and possibly of the business connection which traders have created in a certain locality, and which may not fall in their way again, involves serious loss, and of course retards the progress of the country. The inflammability of the material of which houses are

built, and the almost suicidal carelessness of the people, combine to make conflagrations and the burning down of several blocks an episode in the life of a town-bred Burman recurring too frequently to excite comment.

CHAPTER II.

UPPER BURMA (*Continued*).

System of Government — The Reigning King — Official Corruption — Taxation — Emigration — The Army — Strength and Weakness as a Military Power—Trade between Upper Burma and British Burma—Burmese Produce—Trade between British Burma and South China—French Intrigue in Siam and Burma—English Influence must be asserted—Future of Indo-China.

IN Indo-China pure despotic Governments flourish. The system of government in Burma is similar to that of China. The king is an absolute monarch, having under him four and sometimes six Woon-gyees, or principal officers of State, constituting a court termed the Hlwot-dau —the designated crown prince or some other prince specially appointed being president of this council. The Woon-gyees have no special depart-

ments in the distribution of business, but deliberate together on whatever is brought before them. Their decisions are recorded by clerks of the council known as Tsaré-dau-gyees, or by others called Than-dau-zens. Atwenwoons are interior or household ministers who attend the king in turn, and there are four or six of these. Orders of the council are submitted by them to the king for approval, and they are the immediate recipients of the royal orders, though in rank inferior to the Woon-gyees. Besides the cases adjudged by the Hlwot-dau collectively, it has always been the custom for many suits to be referred to individual ministers at their own houses, and this used to be one of the principal sources of revenue to the Woon-gyees. The Atwenwoons transact the extensive business arising in the present reign out of the royal monopolies. The Woon-douks are the third order of ministers, and may be termed the assistants of the Woon-gyees, with whom they sit in the Hlwot-dau, though in an inferior position.

The country is generally divided into myos, or districts, named after the chief town, and these are

subdivided into circles or taiks, the smaller subdivisions or village tracts being known as yumas. Each district has its Myo-woon or governor, under whom is a Myo-thoo-gyee; while each taik has a Taik-thoo-gyee, each village its own local official, and over small clusters of houses there are goungs, or headmen. All, with the exception of these last, though really appointed for the collection of revenue, participate in the administration of justice and share in the perquisites derivable under that head. The present King of Burmah has become infamous through his many massacres, and the weak and shameless manner in which he has allowed every endeavour to establish a Government of order to be thwarted by palace intrigues, excited by evil and ambitious women, and resulting in the estrangement of his foreign neighbours, and in the utmost abhorrence and terror among his own people. The last massacre was a crowning act of ferocity and folly.

As none of the officers connected with the judicial or fiscal administration of the country receive any salary, they are chartered oppressors of

the people; for, following a system common to the East, these officials are dependent for their emoluments on peculation, extortion, and the reception of bribes. Justice is openly bought and sold. Princes, governors, and high officials are allowed to collect the revenue from districts or villages for their own benefit, and the only limit to their demands is the endurance or the paying-power of the people. Every functionary, from the highest to the lowest, squeezes those whose necessities bring them to ask the interference of his office. Gatekeepers, policemen, servants—all are alike.

The principal taxes are a poll-tax of 4½ rupees (about 7*s.* 6*d.*), and various taxes on agriculture, which are sometimes collected in kind at ten per cent. on the produce. Duties are levied on salt, cotton, cutch, lead, timber, and rubies; while endless licences are issued in the king's name, the payments for which add to his revenue. Timber is a royal monopoly, and so are petroleum and precious stones. Since the beginning of 1881 the king has introduced a mischievous system of monopolies for dealing in cotton, cutch, and

pickled tea. There are taxes on ploughs, on brokerage, transit dues, dues on the sale of cattle, various dues on produce, and dues levied from fishermen and others; and criminal cases are also charged with fines.

The heavy taxation on all articles of trade entering or leaving the Shan states, together with the brutal and ceaseless oppression and greed of the officials, must have been one of the chief causes for the late successful rebellion of those states. The exactions and plunderings on the part of the Burmese officials at the numerous kyus, the demands for licensed brokerage, and other vexatious imposts, compelled the Shan traders to endeavour to dispose of their merchandise by stealth, as they were afraid to expose them in the public marts. The treatment of these Shans by the Burmese rulers has all along been most execrable. Lieutenant Sconce, who crossed their country with the Salween expedition, says, "We came to the Burmese outpost, at the head of the Natteik (Nattik) Pass, consisting of thirty men, and stationed here principally to prevent the Shans from leaving their country without

permission, which they would most certainly do if they had the opportunity, they so detest the Burmese rule, which is not to be wondered at, for there is no regular system of taxation, but when the governor requires any money from a certain village, he sends out a body of troops to bring in so many tickals of silver from the head-man; and if this is not at once forthcoming, the village is plundered and burnt; and as the amount depends on the governor's requirements, it may be called upon at any time, and often more than once a year. So they are all in constant fear, and have no inducement to acquire money, for if any man was known to possess any money, he would be at once come down upon for a large contribution. So they would one and all willingly come down into our territory, if they could; but such is the strict guard that is always kept at all the outlets (the Shan Mountains bounding the table-land facing Upper Burma are of mural limestone and other like precipitous rocks, which are so steep that there are only two or three places where they can be descended) that very few ever succeed in getting

away, and those are generally single men, without family or relations; for if they had any, and left them behind, they would most probably be tortured and kept inside the stockade as hostages until the man's return."

The Myo-tsa (literally, the "town-eater") and local officials have to send large sums annually to the king; and so long as these are forthcoming, and are large enough, no questions are asked, though of course these amounts must be wrung from the people, who have a further crushing burden to bear in being forced to provide from each district a stated contingent of able-bodied men to serve in the army, for the execution of public works, and for other special purposes. The Crown sometimes levies extraordinary contributions on the occasion of great national emergencies; and, all things considered, the burden of taxation in Burma is so heavy that there can be no wonder at the steady flood of emigration which continues year after year. On the north too a strict watch is kept, and there are natural insurmountable obstacles in the way of free emigration; but

the British provinces lying to the southward have had up to now an increase to the population of close on 340,000 men born in Burma proper. Thousands more would leave but that their families are held as hostages by the king, and any attempt at deserting their native land would be instantly visited with the most rigorous punishment on those of their kindred who are left behind. As a rule only single men, with no families or near relatives to leave as hostages, come over into British territory. Of the remainder, some take the consequences, and others turn to advantage the loose hold the Government has over individual families and clear out bodily. Thus the tide of emigration still continues, despite the efforts of the king to stop it; and a very small portion of the emigrants ever return. British Burma offers too many advantages to them to be readily abandoned when loyalty to their own rulers is met with such a poor reward.

From what has been said it will be understood that the written code, civil and penal—which strains at a high standard of excellence—is simply

a dead letter. The great instrument of punishment is the bamboo. Indeed, it is perhaps the most powerful engine of government. Common punishments for minor offences are imprisonment, labour in chains, the stocks, and fines; for serious crimes there are flogging, branding, maiming, slavery to pagodas, and death. The incorrigible, when no longer able to pay fines, are tattooed with a circle on the cheek, or the name of the offence on their breast. Persons thus marked are deprived of civil rights, and become dead in law. Capital punishment seldom occurs, and almost exclusively for murder and treason. It is inflicted by beheading, drowning, or crucifixion.

The land is all regarded as belonging to the Crown, but any one may occupy as much of it as he pleases, and in any place not already held by another. He has only to inclose and cultivate it, and it is his. If the boundary be not maintained, or the inclosed space be for several successive years unimproved, it reverts to the king, and may be taken up by any other person. The king is supposed to own all the elephants in the kingdom, and has

generally from 1000 to 2000 that have been caught and tamed.

The rabble composing the army of the king, whatever it may once have been, is not now very formidable. The men are levied from the districts, and as the local officials make a considerable revenue out of selling exemption to those who are rich enough to buy it, the men who ultimately appear in the ranks are the refuse of the population. Many who suffer from the various physical defects which would permanently disqualify a man from service in European armies are not here thrown out on that account. The officers are totally ignorant of drill or scientific strategy, and have no control over the men. For many years the rulers of Burma have made some show of engaging foreigners to drill their troops, and several Europeans have from first to last hung about the capital on this business, with nominally princely salaries; but the royal month, when money has to be paid, is apt to assume dimensions not recognized by Europeans nor agreeable to them. From this cause principally, one after the

other, those adventurers have dropped off, and now only a few remain. They are mostly Frenchmen. The native officers will not delegate the smallest authority to the European instructors, but expect them, by their mere presence in the camp, to work a miracle with the soldiers. They are joked at openly by the men, and even when the little authority they are allowed is defied nobody dreams of vindicating it.

Burma, like many other semi-barbarous states of the East, is a refuse-pit for all the condemned arms of the arsenals of Europe and America; and, when the various bribes to officials who have the passing of the supplies are paid, the useless weapons cost as much as the very best that could be got from a reputable manufacturer. Arms of all models, with ammunition just as variegated, are served out to a rabble who are impractical to the last degree, besides being very much afraid of their guns for some considerable time. And it is with this material that the threats of driving into the sea are to be carried out against the British! It was once proposed in council by a Burman warrior

to take Calcutta and Fort William with 3000 men, and overrun India with the same number.

Artillery is a neglected branch of the national defences, and, except in rare cases, where the whim for acquiring European appliances has wandered from dynamos, photographic apparatus, printing-presses, and such like, the king has not a single gun of any size, beyond some stolen or bought a generation back from ships visiting the coast. The military power of Burma is at best but a very badly managed piece of humbug, deceiving no one. Still, it must never be forgotten that the power of resistance of a country like Burma is not to be measured by the numerical strength or efficiency of its army. The obstacles are the natural difficulties of the country and the climate. For aggression contemptible, the Burmese army has a certain power of resistance for defence.

Monopolies, unstable government, and grinding oppression naturally operate to the serious detriment of trade in Burma. British enterprise, in the shape of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, with its head-quarters at Rangoon, keeps up a

regular service on the river by means of a magnificent fleet of steamers, and year by year this fleet is being added to by the building of superior boats. The trade of the river is principally in the hands of this company. The internal trade is chiefly in the possession of Bombay merchants, Parsees, and Chinese, not a single Englishman being established at Mandalay. Considerable trade at one time existed between Burma and South China, but the routes are now so disturbed that this trade is almost totally suspended, and the cotton formerly sent to China will now probably come to British Burma. The monopolies granted by the king form a standing grievance to our merchants in British Burma, and constitute, in some eyes, almost a more formidable indictment against him than is supplied by the constantly recurring massacres. No monopolies have as yet been granted for imported goods. The Burmese do not shine as business men; their inclinations lead them more to agricultural pursuits, and nothing more than the petty retail trade of the country is in their hands.

The exports from Upper Burma to British Burma in 1880–81 amounted to £1,613,972. They included 1221 ponies and mules, 21,363 cattle, 103 sheep and goats, 30,287 maunds of canes and rattans, £26,263 of Chinese and Japanese ware, 3,085,682 yards of native piece-goods, £8247 of fruit, 22,887 maunds of wheat, 339,946 maunds of grain and pulse, 3527 maunds of rice, 175,662 maunds of cutch, 3068 maunds of other gums and resins; hides and skins, £35,504; horns, £1517; lac, £3843; mats, £4924; metals, £9840; specie, £544,037; petroleum, 129,890 maunds; other oils, 46,673 maunds; orpiment, 209 maunds; provisions, £49,293; teal or gingelly seed, 12,180 maunds; manufactured silk, £91,491; jade, £23,630; unrefined sugar, 258,474 maunds; tea, 15,070 maunds; tobacco, 6680 maunds; and wood, 437,405 maunds.

The imports to Upper Burma from British Burma in 1880–81 amounted to £1,712,302. They included animals, £2920; borax, £30; canes and rattans, £138; Chinese ware, £49; coal and coke, £500; raw cotton, £97; manufactured

cotton, European twist, and yarn £191,918; European piece-goods, £281,549; drugs and medicines, £2915; dyeing materials, £4005; earthenware and porcelain, £30,701; jute, 46,025 maunds; fruit and nuts, £64,000; rice husked, 29,229 maunds; rice unhusked, 16,982 maunds; hides and skins, £4129; liquors, £9013; mats, £3414; metals—brass and copper, £13,816; iron, £22,331; other metals, £16,028; specie, £134,180; oils, £10,934; provisions—ghee, 1356 maunds; ngapee, 584,392 maunds; other kinds of provisions, £17,548; raw silk, £103,878; manufactured silk, £257,800; spices, £14,507; refined sugar, 10,939 maunds; tea, 1881 maunds; woollen goods, £77,401; other articles of merchandise, unmanufactured, £11,497; manufactured, £113,516.

The trade between Upper Burma and Yunnan before 1855 is said to have exceeded £500,000 a year, and was mainly carried on through the now independent Shan state of Theinnee.

Rupees are coined by the king of such base metal that they are only worth 1*s.* 4*d.* in the

bazaars; the smaller coinage is equally debased. Indian rupees are current at all the river stations, and are gradually penetrating throughout the countries to the eastwards. Indian four-anna pieces are in great demand for buttons and other ornaments. The general interest on loans is often sixty per cent. with good security.

The Burman year consists of twelve lunar months, making the year only 354 days long. To supply this deficiency a whole intercalary month is introduced every third year. The further rectifications which become necessary are made from time to time by royal proclamation at the instance of the astronomers. The common era corresponds with our A.D. 639. The year commences about the middle of April; so that the 15th of April, 1875, was the first of their year 1237. In numbering the days of the month they go no higher than fifteen; that is, from new moon to full, and from full to new. They have four worship days in a month, namely, new and full moon, and half-way between them; so that there is an interval of seven days, and sometimes of eight. Without any

regard to this arrangement, time is divided into exact weeks of seven days each. The days are called from the planets as ours are; thus, they name the first day of the week from the sun, the second from the moon, the third from Mars, the fourth from Mercury; fifth, Jupiter; sixth, Venus; seventh, Saturn.

Productions.—Rice, oil-seeds, sugar-cane, cotton, indigo, tobacco, cutch, sessamum, tea, Indian corn, wheat, millet, and sugar from the Palmyra palm.

Fruit trees.—Oranges, limes, mangoes, jacks, papayas, guavas, cashew-nuts, pine-apples, plantains, custard-apples, sweet limes, citrons, pomegranates, tamarinds, jujubes, shaddocks, and many others.

Vegetables.—Sweet potatoes, yams, beans of several kinds, horse-radish tree, wild asparagus, gourds, brinjal, tomatoes, okra, leeks, onions, chilies, mushrooms, and Chinese radishes.

Forests.—Teak, pine, pyngado, padouk, pyema, thitsee, eng, wild mango, and many other kinds. Bamboos grow to a height of from eighty to a hundred feet; and the trees in the ever-green

forest, from a hundred and fifty to two hundred feet.

Minerals.—Coal, gold, copper, petroleum, salt, limestone, marble. The districts where the amber, silver, lead, and jade mines exist are no longer tributary to Burma.

Geology.—Granite, gneiss, mica-schist, shales, sandstone, and limestone are the principal rocks met with.

Precious Stones.—The famous ruby and sapphire mines lie a little north-east of Mandalay, in lat. 23° 10′, long. 96° 30′.

Animals.—Gibbons, monkeys, lemurs, flying lemurs, frugiverous bats, the flying foxes, insectivorous bats, jungle dogs, jackal, gray civet cat, common viverette, tree cats, mongoose, tiger, pard, clouded leopard, fishing tiger-cat, bay cat, leopard cat, common wild cat, otters, martens, weazels, badgers, Malayan black bear, tree shrew, hedgehog, musk shrew or musk rat, shrews, moles, the Irrawaddy dolphin, elephant, flying squirrels, squirrels, rats, mice, porcupines, hares, wild boar, mouse deer, samber, hog deer, brow-antlered deer, bark-

ing deer, wild goat, bison, gayal, wild cow, buffalo, tapirs, rhinoceroses, Malayan dugon, and the scaly ant-eater.

Birds.—There are 771 species of birds found in Burma. Of these about 450 are found on the Indian continent beyond the Brahmaputra. One hundred of these are water-birds, which are found over almost the whole extent of Europe, Asia, and Africa, and are nearly all winter visitors to Burma. Of the remaining 350 Indian species—all land birds—about two hundred find their southern limit in Burma, about a hundred range through Burma into the Malay peninsula, and about fifty extend laterally into China and Siam. The swallow, kestrel, barn owl, stone-chat, pipit, wag-tail, cuckoo, skylark; snipe, plover, and other water-birds; are the same as in England. There are pea-fowl, jungle-fowl, pigeons, doves, pheasants, partridges, quail, horn-bills, parrots, honey-suckers, finches, crows, jays, magpies, tomtits, vultures, adjutants, geese, ducks, teal, paddy-birds, etc.

Reptiles.—Crocodiles, tortoises, lizards, snakes, frogs, toads, newts, and waglers.

Burmese rulers have always regarded with extreme suspicion any exploring parties under foreigners passing through their territory, and what support they have accorded them has always been obtained by force. The influence of Chinese merchants at Mandalay desirous of maintaining a monopoly has probably had a good deal to do with this; but the king is appealed to on a very soft point when those about him urge the rapidity with which Europeans from their innocent wish to see, progress to a strong desire to possess, fine tracts of country such as Burma affords. The fact that the flower of the provinces once belonging to his empire are now in the hands of the British, after having been wrested from his predecessors in wars preceded by the advent of Europeans, does not tend to allay the king's misgivings. Burma has always paid the greatest deference to China, and Chinese influence is still to this day very strong in the capital. This influence, as may be expected, has never been used otherwise than to thwart and frustrate any attempts on our part to open up a trade between

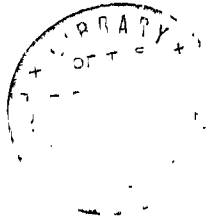
British Burma and South China. The opening of this market would be a bright prospect for our merchants in British Burma, and for the manufacturer at home; and an immense field for the employment of British capital would be thrown open. Trade routes already exist, for within the memory of people not yet very old a prosperous trade existed between Burma and South-Western China; but the policy of exclusion adopted by the Chinese, the disturbed state of the border-lands, and the marauding exploits of bands of free-booters who scour the country between Burma and China, and whom the French action in Tonquin has greatly encouraged, must effectually prevent any development of trade in that direction for some time to come.

French intrigue is now seeking to obtain influence in Siam and Burma, and with some success too. For there is a new treaty of alliance and friendship with the King of Burma, which just now is as useful to the French as if it had been entered into by the Governor of the Scilly Islands. But the Burmese, not so far-sighted as

the acute agents in charge of French interests, will be greatly surprised to see the lever the French will make of the treaty so lightly given, when their colonial schemes in Indo-China have progressed a few more stages towards maturity. Burma is still coquetting with France, and acting insolently towards her best and most long-suffering friend on the south. English influence, which should be and must be paramount in Burma, has not of late years been asserted with such force that the king need think there is anything to fear from our displeasure, although plenty of provocation has been given on his side.

Relations of some sort with the court at Mandalay we must have; but every attempt to secure a renewal of the treaty which expired in 1877 has been shuffled out of by the king, the ostensible bone of contention being the insertion of a clause in the new treaty giving the king power to import arms through British territory—a right which he would be very likely to abuse, and which the Indian Government most wisely is not disposed to allow him.

It is not a very serious undertaking to bring the Burmese monarch to his senses; nothing more than a little firm handling is required. This should have been shown long ago; but the present moment is hardly propitious for drastic measures. All the necessary effect can be produced without going the length of annexation or protection; but the longer the ignorant, weak, and vicious ruler now on the throne is allowed to flout our power and continue his career of misgovernment the more he will be open to foreign intrigue inimical to our interests and his own, and the more difficult will he be to deal with. Not only that, but the more difficult will the larger question of the future of Indo-China become.



CHAPTER III.

BRITISH OR LOWER BURMA.

Topography—The Irrawaddy and Salween Rivers—Population—Religion under our Rule—Converts to Christianity—Excellence of Education—Loyalty to England—Surplus Revenue—Agriculture—Customs—Rangoon—The Irrawaddy Flotilla Company—Railways—Commercial Possibilities—Ought Upper Burma to be annexed?—France and Siam—Our Attitude towards Siam—A Problem to be solved, the sooner the better.

THE provinces of Arakan, Pegu, and Tenasserim, amalgamated and called British Burma since 1862, form one large province, which, topographically considered, consists of four well-marked and distinct portions. In the west is a triangular strip of country with the apex to the south; the north of the tract is a tangled mass of forest-clad mountains, the offshoots of the Arakan

Yoma ("Ridge"), drained by countless torrents, which unite and reach the sea through one or two main rivers; towards the south and west it passes into rich alluvial plains, intersected by a network of tidal creeks, shut in on the east by the Arakan Mountains, which, as they gradually draw near the sea until they end at Pagoda Point, throw out wooded spurs and cross-spurs, filling the face of the country to the exclusion of the plains. The greatest length of the track is about five hundred miles, and its breadth in the north about a hundred miles. The plain country contains some of the most fertile portions of the province, and from it are obtained all the rice-cargoes of the vessels leaving Akyab.

East of the Arakan Yoma are the valleys of the Irrawaddy and of the Sittang (Tsit-toung); both narrow and mountainous in the north, they gradually widen, and a little north of Rangoon the Pegu Yoma (the water-parting between the two) ends, and they unite to form a vast alluvial plain. This stretches southwards to the sea, and extends from the Arakan Yoma on the west, to the Nat-toung and Martaban Hills on the east, and forms

the great rice-ground of British Burma. North of the Kyaik-hto plain, the east central portion of this tract, is a country in many respects similar to that in the north of Arakan, occupied by mountains and their spurs and cross-spurs. The whole is densely wooded and sparsely inhabited with scarcely any cultivation.

Lastly, in the extreme east is a stretch of country bounded by the river Salween and the sea on the west, and by the Dawna chain and main range on the east. It is about forty-seven miles broad in its broadest part, opposite Moulmein, generally level in the north, but with undulating ground here and there, and fantastic outcrops of caverned mural limestone ridges starting suddenly from the plain. This is drained by three great rivers, the Salween, Gyne, and Attaran; and it gradually narrows towards the south, where off-shoots from the high eastern chain cover the country, and convert it from waving fields of rice into a sea of forbidding mountains, with here and there an occasional plain. To these may be added the Mergui archipelago, a cluster of islands

extending from the mouth of the Tavoy river to the extreme south. These are generally mountainous, and, with a few exceptions, covered from their summits to the water's edge with rich and varied foliage, presenting a charming variety of scenery.

British Burma extends (from 20° 50′ N. lat. to 10° N. lat.) for nearly 1000 miles along the eastern shore of the Bay of Bengal. It is divided from the Indian province of Chittagong on the west by the offshoots of the Arakan Yoma, running from Sylhet and Cachar in Lower Bengal to Cape Negrais. On the north lie Independent Burma, and Karennee. A line drawn from a peak of this range (in 19° 29′ 3″ N. lat.) defines the northern boundary drawn across to the mountains east of the Sittang river. There the independent state of Karennee completes the northern boundary between British Burma and Upper Burma. The eastern boundary from this follows (in 10 N. lat.) the western frontier of Siam to the Isthmus of Kraw. The Siamese Malay States of the peninsula lie to the south of this.

The delta of the Irrawaddy river (beginning at about 18° 30′ N. lat.) gradually spreads out until it reaches to a breadth of 150 miles at the seaboard. The river within British territory varies from three-quarters of a mile to three miles in breadth, and rises in places about forty feet during the floods. It has been embanked along its west side for over a hundred miles, and an embankment seventy miles in length has been made along the east side of the Bassein river, one of the branches of the main river.

The Salween, a river rising in the south-eastern corner of the Tibetan table-land, flows through Yunnan, the Shan States, and British territory, to the sea, but only its lower portion belongs to us. This river, although some 1200 miles in length and of great volume, is not navigable for ships above Moulmein, a town about twenty-seven miles from its mouth. For the purposes of commerce the Salween is practically useless, on account of the enormous fall in the river, and the narrow gorges through which it forces its way. For this reason no road or railway can ever be taken along its banks. The

other chief rivers of British Burma are the Sittang, Hline or Rangoon, Arakan, Beeling, Attaran, Gyne, Tavoy, and Tenasserim. The first is practically useless for purposes of navigation owing to the large and dangerous "bore" which runs up it at the rate of twelve miles an hour. The rest are of little value as means of communication.

The approximate area of the province, according to the most reliable statistics, is 88,566 square miles. Of this about 35,000 miles are cultivatable, but up to now only about 4000 are actually under cultivation.

The last census, taken in 1881, showed the population of British Burma to be 3,736,771 souls, an increase of thirty-six per cent. since 1872. Of this amount 11,860 are Europeans and Eurasians, 246,289 natives of India, and 12,962 Chinese, the remainder being Burmese, Talaings, and Karens, Chins, Toungthoos, Shans, and other hill men. The number of males is somewhat in excess of the females—a result chiefly due to the large number of immigrants from Upper Burma.

The religion of the vast majority of the people

under our rule in British Burma is Buddhism, tempered largely by Shamanism, as in Upper Burma. But immigration from India and the surrounding states is so free that several other religions are imported, and quickly find supporters enough to need places of worship of their own. This varied show of faiths naturally takes place only in the large towns, where Buddhists, Mahomedans, Hindoos, Parsees, Chinese, and quite as many Christian sects, are represented. The latter carry on an active propaganda, but the Buddhists of Burma have shown so stolid a front to the Christian missionaries that the progress made, except among the Karens, must be pronounced exceedingly meagre. Buddhists are not by any means easily argued out of their faith into another. To judge by the way pagodas and monasteries are founded and kept up, the hold of Buddhism is not very much shaken even in Rangoon; and the only people who have embraced Christianity to any extent and with any sincerity are the Karens, a people of very mild disposition, and not bound by a faith handed

down from generation to generation. Among them very considerable and satisfactory progress has been made, though actually only between two and three per cent. of the population are Christians.

Considering the backward state of the people in many other respects, education shows up well, fifty-two per cent. of the males over twelve years of age being returned as able to read and write. In the country districts the monasteries are the only schools, as in Upper Burma; but the Buddhist monks, with most praiseworthy liberality, have welcomed a system of education proposed by a Government professing a rival faith, and in many monasteries native children are now given a rudimentary but sound education, which is more easily acquired and much more useful than the crude native course.

Missionary labour first, and the Government later on, have helped forward this movement by the preparation of school books in the vernacular, setting forth the elements of geography, mathematics, astronomy, agriculture, human physiology, etc. In the large towns, and par-

ticularly in Rangoon, many fine institutions, both public and private, exist for the purpose of giving children of all races and creeds a sound Western education. They are principally conducted by missionaries or by masters appointed and controlled by the Government, and in the case of the former a considerable sum of money is spent annually by the Government in grants in aid without regard to sect. Protestants and Roman Catholics alike receive help, without which many institutions would have to close their doors. Female education is not altogether neglected; but as yet it is very backward—a fact which must be greatly regretted, for the woman-kind of Burma exercise an important influence in the country.

The advantages of an English education are largely sought by boys in the large towns—principally, perhaps, on account of its relatively high market value. But, whatever the motive may be, the fact remains that a great improving power is at work, slowly but surely lifting the dense veil of ignorance under which the native vision has hitherto been obscured.

As yet we have few disaffected subjects in Burma, such as education has produced in plenty in India. None but the most captious of natives in British Burma are able to find ground for more than a healthy criticism of the administration under which they live. The extent to which its advantages are appreciated may be judged from the number of immigrants from Upper Burma and the surrounding states who come to settle under our rule. The Government most wisely guards very carefully against any of their prejudices being trespassed upon, while the sumptuary laws, which under native rulers are so rigorously carried out, are unknown under the British. A man may build spired roofs, carry umbrellas of any size, wear the peacock emblem, or even talk mild sedition without let or hindrance; to do any one of these things, or very much less, in Upper Burma would certainly cost him his liberty, and possibly, or rather probably, his life. The province is one of the most prosperous in the Indian Empire. A surplus revenue of over a million sterling is credited to India yearly, and has been for the last

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eight years, after paying all cost of administration, civil and military. The people are easy to govern, and our yoke sits lightly on their shoulders. Considerably more than half the population live by agriculture, principally in growing rice, to meet the enormous export which has sprung up in Burma of late years.

The condition of this agricultural population is prosperous. Only about one-fifth are in debt at all, and very few of these are so involved that a good harvest will not clear off all they owe. A surprisingly large trade on steamers, boats, the railway, and on carts, is carried on and fostered by the construction of trunk and "feeder" roads and canals, and placing light-draught steamers on the lesser rivers wherever possible. But the fringes of the work before the Government in the way of inland communication are scarcely yet touched. A great deal remains to be done, and some general scheme should be decided on and prosecuted with vigour.

The customs of the people differ hardly at all from those of the people of Upper Burma. The

first contact of the West with the East, has produced in Burma an effect similar to that observed elsewhere. The rising generation show a disposition to ape the vices of their Western teachers, and can scarcely be said to acquire their virtues with the same speed. But there is no want of promise that an enlightened policy on the part of the Government will open up ways for the development of those qualities of self-respect and responsibility which characterize the European.

The natives are generally well housed. Outside the large seaport towns masonry is seldom employed, the houses being built of wood and bamboo, which are very plentiful. But this does not indicate poverty, where climatic and local conditions often render light, easily portable houses desirable.

Of the many large towns in British Burma, Rangoon, a city situate about thirty miles from the mouth of the Rangoon river, is the chief. It derives its main importance from its good approaches by sea and its connection with the Irrawaddy by means of navigable creeks. Before

the British occupation an unimportant collection of huts, Rangoon is now a large city, well laid out, and containing some 150,000 inhabitants; while the rice and teak trades have assumed enormous dimensions. The Irrawaddy Flotilla Company's steamers run from Rangoon, through British Burma, into Upper Burma, and it is the depôt for nearly all the up-country trade. Its public buildings are more useful than beautiful, although large sums of money have been spent on the erection of massive Government offices, etc.; but the general appearance of the city is thriving, and gives evidence of enormous vitality. In this respect it affords a very striking contrast to the capital of French Cochin-China, Saigon. Rangoon has been the subject of many attempts at fortification, but at the present time its defences are quite insufficient and antiquated. In a desultory way the question of defences has from time to time occupied the attention of the Government, but nothing serious has been done. Besides Rangoon, the principal seaports are Akyab, Bassein, and Moulmein; and there are many inland towns with a population

varying between 16,000 and 5000. But Rangoon, situate at the mouth of the Irrawaddy, is bound to distance any competitor.

The only line of railway completed is that from Rangoon to Prome, about 170 miles in length; but another from Rangoon to Toungoo, a town on the north-east frontier, close to Karennee, is shortly to be opened. It is hoped that in the not very distant future the Toungoo line will be continued northwards through Upper Burma to Mandalay and Bhamo, branching thence to the north-west through a strip of independent territory to Dibragarh, in Assam, to join there the Indian system of railways. Another extension which must come soon is a line of railway carried to the eastward of Zimmé, in northern Siam, and thence ultimately to south-west China, with a branch line to Bangkok, the capital of Siam. A branch of the Toungoo line can be thrown off to Moulmein, opening enormously rich rice lands, now useless. Thence continued into Siam, from Zimmé, the main line should bifurcate, one arm going southwards to Bangkok, the other being carried north-

wards through the Shan States to some large and convenient trade centre on the border of Yunnan.

The enormous possibilities in the way of trade, if these schemes be carried out, cannot be calculated. Their practicability, however, from an engineering point of view, has recently been perfectly ascertained, as Mr. Holt Hallet's report of the exploration surveys (first season's operations), prepared for the Royal Geographical Society and Chambers of Commerce, will enable the public to know. That an enormous trading field would be thrown open there can be no doubt whatever; and the countries through which the lines pass would be raised from a condition of isolation and semi-barbarism to one of comparative civilization.

The great obstacles in the way of these schemes taking practical shape are the attitude of Upper Burma, and the fear on the part of Siam that the endeavour to link on Siam by means of railways with Burma will involve her with France. As regards the first, public opinion in Rangoon is clamouring for the annexation of Upper Burma outright, but public opinion in Rangoon on this

subject is not to be greatly trusted. It probably would matter little to the community there what calamities might occur in Mandalay if their interests were not to a certain extent involved; and if there were an earthquake instead of a massacre, the feeblest reasoning would probably convince them that England would be better off if she at once took Upper Burma under her wing. We must annex it some day, no doubt, but before doing so there is a larger question involved, from which any action in Upper Burma cannot be dissociated—namely, the future settlement of Indo-China.

This political question, of the greatest importance to India and England, is daily gathering strength, and will not be so easily dealt with unless prompt action is taken. The public are well acquainted with the French plans with regard to Siam and the Shan States. With France in that country, or having any title to interfere in it, innumerable difficulties in dealing with Upper Burma and its tributary states will crop up where now there are none. Our immediate duty, there-

fore, is to give the warmest support to Siam in the shape of an alliance, and aid her in developing the country and executing reforms. The Shan nations on the north, up to the Chinese frontier, are already attracted towards Siam, and are willing to throw in their lot with her; and China has less objections to our influence being paramount on her southern and western frontiers than she has to that of France.

With the independence of Siam throughout all parts of the kingdom, a cushion between French and English interests would be established, and all the obstacles to the development of trade with South-Western China and the intermediate states would vanish. Just now there is a hitch in French schemes in the extreme East, but this will be got over sooner or later, and the coming difficulty sketched above will then have to be faced by Great Britain. The sooner it is faced the better.

THE END.

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